

AIR POUCH  
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## FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

492

DESP. NO.

April 2, 1959

DATE

FROM : AmEmbassy, SAN SALVADOR

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

REF : Periodic Requirements List, CA-7145, February 19, 1959

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SUBJECT: Incidents on Salvadoran/Honduran Border

This despatch is in reference to the following paragraph included in the document under reference:

"2. What is the area involved and the historical antecedents of the border dispute with Honduras which resulted in Honduran protests over Salvadoran incursions in late October, 1958? What prompted the Salvadorans to cross the border? (U)"

We were not aware here that the Government of Honduras had protested to the Government of El Salvador.\* Several months ago reports appeared in the press of a dispute which may have been the one referred to in the document under reference. These newspaper reports originated in Honduras. So far as we know, no publicity regarding the incident originated with the local press. At that time, we made informal inquiry of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding the press stories. The Ministry officer just waived the matter aside with a statement that incidents of this nature had always occurred from time to time and were not considered of particular significance by the Government of El Salvador. We are not sure, therefore, at what point along the border the reported dispute took place. Was it the incident reported in Embassy Tegucigalpa Weeka No. 44, November 4, 1958? 1/

As we understand here, the entire border between El Salvador and Honduras is not defined formally but portions of the border are defined topographically and by informal understanding. For instance, we understand that both governments informally agree that the Rio Goascorán is the proper dividing line for the area separated by the river. We gather that the area of greatest dispute is that in the vicinity of the Salvadoran town of Perquin (Department of Morazan) and the Honduran town of Marcala. According to the local representative of the Inter-American Geodetic Survey, the two countries are now jointly preparing a map of the two countries; this map will not mark the boundary; the two countries, according to this source, intend to agree on the boundary subsequent to the publication of the map.

1/ Some sentences of our copy are blurred and not readable.

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 From San Salvador


Recently the Under Secretary of Foreign Affairs, in a talk with the reporting officer, motioned to the official map of El Salvador, prepared in December, 1956 and said "you can see that the border is not clearly defined along the northern side of the country". And then pointing to the northern portion of the Department of Morazan he said "a Honduran historian claims a portion of this territory for Honduras".

The Under Secretary added that for at least twenty years disputes have arisen between residents, and towns, of the two countries along the border area. These disputes have arisen for a variety of reasons, he said, some through inadvertence, some through arguments regarding the location of the border, some through ill intent, and some by the mere presence of Salvadorans in Honduras who crossed into the latter country illegally in search of a better life than appeared available in over-crowded El Salvador. Even chicken thieves escaping across into one country or another have caused disputes between mayors, he said. Recently there have been "two or three" incidents arising over the construction of a road in El Salvador (Refer to EmbDesp. 392, Weeks No. 6, Feb. 10, 1959). Although the Under Secretary did not say so directly, we received the impression that these latter disputes had their origin in the vagueness of the border line. He said he did not know the exact location of the recently reported disputes. The Embassy knows, however, that El Salvador has been improving a road in the vicinity of Perquin as well as one in the Civala area.

The Under Secretary stated that the Government of El Salvador has never taken these disputes very seriously. He said that President Lemus and President Villeda Morales have a verbal agreement that the disputes will not be permitted to take on significance in so far as good will and over-all relations between the two countries are concerned. Both presidents want the border uncertainty cleared up in a manner befitting the relationships between good friends and neighbors. Uncertainty regarding the border definitely is not in the nature of a dispute between the two countries, he added.

If the Department has information tending to indicate that the uncertainty regarding the border is taken more seriously by either Government than reported herein, we would appreciate receiving that information, for our background information and guidance.

FOR THE AMBASSADOR:



Alton W. Remba  
 First Secretary of Embassy

Department: Please pass copy to AmEmbassy, Tegucigalpa.

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